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Intelligence Agency Will Abolish Office Providing Press Data

WASHINGTON, June 30 (UPI) — The Central Intelligence Agency will abolish its Office of Public Affairs effective tomorrow, an agency spokesman said today.

Herbert E. Hetu, a former Navy captain who has been in charge of the office since 1977, said the public affairs section would be abolished and similar but reduced functions would be shifted to a new department that is to also handle the intelligence agency's communications with Congress.

Agency sources said Mr. Hetu disagreed with the decision and would leave the agency. There was no word on what would happen to his two principal assistants, Dale Peterson and Kathy Pherson.

The agency's public affairs office had a staff of about 12 and distributed a wealth of unclassified material on subjects ranging from Soviet oil and grain production to full lists and background of the leadership of the Soviet Union, China and other Communist nations.

Contacts With Media Diminished

William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, has been cutting down on the agency's contacts with the media since he became head of the agency in February.

Last month the agency ended a longstanding policy of holding briefings for reporters, saying that they were an imposition on the briefing analysts. The background briefings were useful for correspondents being sent abroad, particularly to such areas as the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe.

Referring to investigations by Congress and newspaper exposés of the early 1970's on C.I.A. conduct, Mr. Casey said in an internal memorandum "the difficulties of the past decade are behind us" and the agency no longer had to justify its activities.

The new section that is to absorb the public affairs and legislative liaison offices will be headed by Robert M. Gates, executive staff director to the intelligence agency, who will report directly to Mr. Casey.

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